

Codreanu's *The Prison Notes*

Greg Johnson

1,245 words



Corneliu Zelea Codreanu

The Prison Notes

With Julius Evola's writings on The Iron Guard

Trans. anonymous

Logik Forlag, 2015

This slender volume (128 pages, including many pages of fascinating photographs) is obligatory reading not only for admirers of Corneliu Codreanu, but also for admirers of Julius Evola, for it also includes all of Evola's writings on Codreanu and the Iron Guard.

Codreanu (September 13, 1899–November 30, 1938) was the charismatic founder and leader of Romania's Iron Guard or The Legion of the Archangel Michael (also known as the Legionary Movement). The Iron Guard was a fascist movement in all essentials: nationalist, racialist, traditionalist, authoritarian, aristocratic, militant, anti-capitalist, anti-communist, anti-Semitic, and promising national rebirth through a renewal of the deepest traditions of the Romanian people.

Codreanu claimed that fascist movements aimed at the protection and regeneration of three elements: vital force (race), form (social and political order), and the spirit. German National Socialism emphasized race. Italian Fascism emphasized political order. The Romanian Iron Guard emphasized the spiritual.

Indeed, the Iron Guard was essentially an initiatic spiritual-military order which entered into politics. The Iron Guard's ascetic regimen included fasting and prayer as well as military training. The Iron Guard even had a battalion of suicide troops who were sworn to celibacy. Indeed, the whole Legion emphasized self-sacrifice for the common good.

Imagine if the NSDAP grew out of the SS rather than the reverse and one gets a sense of the Iron Guard. A better analogy, however, would be the Knights Templar or the Teutonic Knights, for unlike the SS, the Iron Guard was deeply and essentially Christian (Romanian Orthodox to be precise).

But there was also an element that went beyond Christianity, for the Legionaries were willing to sacrifice their souls as well as their bodies. They were prepared to incur the wrath of hell itself for their fatherland.

Codreanu's political career began in 1923 in opposition to the emancipation of Romanian Jewry. In November of 1927, he founded the Legion. It was a young group (the average age was 27) and drew its ranks largely from college students and the peasantry.

From the founding of the Legion onward, Codreanu's life was a blur of activity. The Legion threw itself into community organizing and political action, including the occasional assassination and pogrom (another group to which the Legion can be likened is the Muslim mystical order of the **Assassins**). The Iron Guard was banned and legalized. Codreanu and other Legion leaders were both thrown in prison and invited into cabinets.



Corneliu Zelea Codreanu

From 1930 on, Codreanu's main opponent was King Carol II of Romania, the "fascist" king. Carol is a fascinating though repugnant individual. In 1925, he eloped with Magda Lupescu, the daughter of a Jewish pharmacist, who

eventually became his third wife. Because of this, he was removed from the line of succession, and in 1927, when his father King Ferdinand I died, the throne passed to Carol's 5-year-old son Michael, who ruled under a regency. In 1930, however, Carol returned to Romania and in effect mounted a coup against his own son. Installing himself as King Carol II, he ruled not by right of succession or Romanian law, but as a quasi-fascist dictator.

After trying to co-opt and contain the Iron Guard, Carol finally decided to suppress it. In April of 1938, he had Codreanu and other Iron Guard leaders arrested. Codreanu was convicted of treason on fabricated evidence and sentenced to 10 years hard labor.

The "prison notes" were created during this period. In this volume, they occupy under 50 pages and do not stand alone as a literary work. They are little more than a footnote to Codreanu's *For My Legionaries: The Iron Guard*, his principal work. But they are still powerful and necessary reading for all admirers of the *Capitanu* and his cause.

Codreanu gives vivid voice to his suffering, anguish, and outrage, as well as his struggles to keep despair at bay. The loneliness of confinement is underscored by touching stories of solicitude for a puppy, mice, and even a grasshopper, with which he shared his meager rations even as lice and fleas fed upon his increasingly frail body.

Even though the church betrayed and condemned him, Codreanu's notes give much room to intense expressions of Christian piety, particularly meditations on the passion of Jesus, and rightly so, for their enemies and the lies and subterfuges they used were largely the same, as were the eventual outcomes.

As Hitler's star rose, the Iron Guard became more militant, feeling that power was near. Fearful of being deposed, King Carol ordered Codreanu and 13 other leaders of the Legion to be murdered on the night of November 30, 1938. They were strangled and shot; their bodies were drenched with acid; then they were entombed under 7 tons of concrete.

The king merely manufactured a martyr. Codreanu became even more powerful in death and the Legionaries even more militant.

In 1940, after Carol II was forced to cede Romanian territory first to Stalin, then to Hungary and Bulgaria, he was deposed and exiled along with Magda Lupescu, whom he eventually married in 1947. His son Michael returned to the throne, and the Iron Guard under Codreanu's successor Horia Sima formed a National Legionary State in uneasy alliance with the head of the Army, Marshal Ion Antonescu, who had been appointed Prime Minister two days before Carol's abdication.

The Iron Guard used its power to settle accounts, rehabilitating Codreanu and assassinating his enemies. But when they tried to oust Antonescu, they were defeated and their leaders were exiled. In the end, the Iron Guard ruled Romania for only 131 days. (In 1944, King Michael arrested Antonescu and handed him over to the Soviets. He was eventually put to death. The King himself was deposed and exiled in 1947.)

Hitler was surely relieved that he had demurred on proposals to restore the Hohenzollern dynasty in Germany after observing the treachery of their cousins in Romania in 1938 and 1944, not to mention the House of Savoy's role in deposing Mussolini in 1943.

Racial nationalists in Europe are foolish to allow historical sentiment and aristocratic principle to bind them to the remnants of the old monarchies and aristocracies. This trans-national and anti-nationalist bunch of largely degenerate snobs typically cannot suffer the necessary rise of a new aristocracy of blood and character, which can, of course, incorporate the best elements of the old aristocracy but should abolish their traditional status and prerogatives whenever feasible. These dynasties have snuffed out rival dynasties out of mere ambition. Deposing them for the good of the race is far gentler treatment than they have meted out to their rivals.

In all honesty, the first part of *The Prison Notes* I read was Appendix I, which contains six articles about Codreanu and the Iron Guard by Julius Evola. They are largely repetitive, and the last two pretty much reprise the first four as well as offer new information. Evola met Codreanu once in 1938. Although Evola was no Christian, that did not prevent him from being enormously impressed by Codreanu as a spiritual and political leader. Evola reports that he was tall and handsome, with dark hair and blue eyes, naive and sincere, intensely charismatic and otherworldly, yet also completely down to earth. (He personally drove Evola back to his hotel after their meeting.) The most interesting thing about these articles is the intensity of anti-Semitic feeling they betray on both Evola and Codreanu's part. Every follower of the Baron as well as the Captain will want to add this book to his library.